



Beyond *the* Offering



Energizing Congregational Giving

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

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from the Carolina office of
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& Human Services

Return to Church Has Plateaued

This headline is certainly NOT what we were hoping to read as we approach the summer months.

According to a March 2022 [Pew Research Center report](#), while more houses of worship are attempting to get back to regular patterns of worship services and programming, in-person

attendance numbers have changed very little if any since fall 2021. The survey points to a plateau of attendance at in-person services as well as the share of adults watching religious services online or on television.

Just about two-thirds of individuals who said they usually attended church at least monthly pre-pandemic said they were again attending worship in person (67%), which is approximately the same who reported attending in September 2021 (64%). In my non-scientific informal conversations with clergy from various Christian denominations, many commented that the drop-off from their Easter service in-person participation to their most recent services has been significant. And they are concerned.

As some have commented, THIS is the new reality of church. Some of those who may have said they would be coming back to in-person attendance aren't coming back. Nonetheless, many of these same churches experiencing the plateau are seeing an increase in financial contributions.

Pre-pandemic, our congregations were already facing major challenges: Increased competition for the philanthropic dollar because of an ever-increasing view that religious giving is not just for the church; a decline of trust in institutions (including houses of faith!) as well as a rise in the desire for greater transparency in how they operate fiscally; and a decline in denominational loyalty.

And now, our congregations are having to address the challenges of building a community based on a hybrid variety of audiences – some attending in person, others via a virtual format.

As you consider planning for the rapidly approaching fall

stewardship/annual giving season and for your next year's budgeting process, I offer three opportunities for your consideration:

1. Highlight the multiple ways someone can give financially to support the congregation's budget and ministries whether in person or virtually. Don't forget to address your live streaming or online video participants directly to invite their participation during the offertory in your service. Even the more liturgical churches are altering their offertory language to be inclusive of those attending through video channels as well as those attending in person by saying something akin to "Creator God, gather our gifts from the four sacred directions as we give you thanks." [Thanks to The Rev. Kay Sylvester, Rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tustin CA for these words.]

2. Ramp up your use of the various channels of social media. Church giving online continues to increase and people are turning to mobile communications now more than ever. Remember that 49% of all church transactions are now done with credit cards and 60% of those giving to churches are willing to use digital formats. (NP Source) Make it easy for your members to contribute by placing hyperlinks or "give" buttons in prominent locations in all social media as well as on your congregation's webpage. And make sure that your website is mobile friendly!

3. Give your members a reason to participate financially by being specific in your request. Growing up in the 1950's and 1960's, I recall that all that our church had to do was say, "You need to give this year," and we as members would respond. Today, when clergy leaders say, "You should give," more people ask (or at least think this if they don't outright ask it) "WHY?" How is my money going to be used? What does the church need? Why is generosity important? Why should I give to you and not to other organizations that are doing good work? Have answers to these questions and be prepared to share this information – and to share it often!

In the months ahead, as our congregations determine what attendance will look like and how that might affect giving, be open to change and new opportunities. Even if in person attendance has plateaued, there are still opportunities for us to engage our members.

We Are Here to Help!

Do you need help with assessing your congregation's planning for next year? Our church consultants are here to guide you.

Alexander Haas is dedicated to helping churches/congregations build strong fundraising programs to meet both immediate and long-term objectives for mission and ministry.

Simply send us some basic information [using this link](#) and we will reach out to get the ball rolling.

Our Team

Alexander·Haas

Please join us for the release of
Giving USA Results for 2021
Tuesday, June 21, 2022

Giving USA Presentation & Reception
In-Person & Zoom
4:00pm Presentation
5:00pm Reception

In-person Location
CHRIS 180
1030 Fayetteville Road SE, Atlanta, GA 30316

Presented by Alexander Haas
in partnership with AFP Greater Atlanta Chapter

Despite the Pandemic, giving in 2020 reached an all-time high. Is it possible that government stimulus and a souring stock market could drive giving to a new high in 2021, even in a year that included more Covid restrictions and historic supply chain disruptions? David King's presentation of Giving USA Foundation's Annual Survey of Giving will offer an in-depth look as to how nonprofits are performing and share trends in giving. We hope you will join us.

Reservations are required.
Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Churches Still Helping Churches

A fundraising campaign to help small churches during the COVID-19 pandemic has been extended with a \$100,000 donation to congregations of the Church of God in Christ. The Churches Helping Churches initiative started early in the pandemic in 2020 with an emphasis on larger congregations helping smaller ones at risk of closing. The relief fund benefited recipients in low-income neighborhoods disproportionately affected by the resulting economic shutdown. In the end, \$3,000 grants were distributed to 450 U.S. congregations, totaling \$1.4 million. But even though the active fundraising for the campaign ended, money still came in over the past year. *RNS, 5-27*

Southern Baptists 19% Attendance Drop, COVID to Blame

The only other growth Southern Baptists saw in 2021 was in financial giving. Contributions increased by \$304 million for a total of \$11.8 billion overall. The average in-person weekly

attendance at Southern Baptist Convention churches declined 18.75%, from 4,439,797 in 2020 to 3,607,530 in 2021. Christian education saw an even larger decrease of 22.15%, with Sunday school, Bible study and small groups reduced from 2,879,130 to 2,241,514. And membership is continuing its decline of many years with a 3% loss, from 14,089,947 in 2020 to 13,680,493 in 2021. In addition to continuing loss in membership, there was a drop in total number of congregations for the fourth year in a row. Congregations in 2021 totaled 50,423, down from a peak of 51,920 in 2017. *RNS*, 5-12

Ramadan Calls for Giving, \$1.8M in '21

Muslim Americans gave \$1.8 billion in zakat funding to domestic and international causes in 2021, according to a new report released today by the **Muslim Philanthropy Initiative at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at IUPUI**. The average Muslim American household donated \$2,070 of zakat funds to charity. Zakat, the third of five pillars of Islam, is an obligatory act of giving. While there is no prescribed time for zakat or sadaqa, many American Muslims fulfill charitable obligations during Ramadan, when charity is emphasized. *PND*, 4-21

The Chronicle of Philanthropy to Become Nonprofit

The Chronicle of Philanthropy announced plans to become an independent nonprofit organization. In September 2020, the publication entered a partnership with the Associated Press and the Conversation, which added five AP and Chronicle journalists to cover the nonprofit sector and created a yearlong fellowship program designed to help local and regional news organizations better cover the social sector. As a nonprofit, the Chronicle intends to expand its staff with at least 13 new positions, including at least eight new editorial staff, and expand its technology and business teams. It aims to double its revenue and number of subscribers within five years. *COP*, 5-6

Trust in Nonprofits Falls Slightly

While there is room for U.S. institutions across the board to increase public trust, a majority of respondents to a new survey believe nonprofits will do what is right for society. The third annual *Trust in Civil Society* survey found that 56% of Americans said they trust nonprofits, down 3 percentage points from the 2020 benchmark study (59%). Trust in philanthropy edged down from 36% to 34% during the same period. According to the survey, financial well-being and education are major drivers of trust, and trust of nonprofits among women fell during the pandemic. *PND*, 5-21

[Our Facebook](#)

[Our LinkedIn](#)

Welcome New Client Partner



We Know Faith-Based Organizations

For more than 35 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with both large and small faith-based organizations, helping sow the seeds of compassion, hope and charity. Take a look at our list of religious

congregation clients, past and present.

Our Clients

A Fresh Approach to Fundraising

Raising the funds to meet the mission and ministry needs of churches is becoming increasingly challenging. At Alexander Haas, we understand the challenges that congregations face in raising the funds to support their mission. More importantly, we understand how to overcome those challenges. We offer a variety of stewardship services for the unique needs of faith-based organizations.

Our Services



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